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Early Childhood Education: An Islamic Perspective in the Light of Iqbal's
Philosophy of Education

*L'educazione dell'infanzia: una prospettiva islamica alla luce del pensiero pedagogico di
Muhammad Iqbal*

Amina Murad
Institute of Business Management, Karachi
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0620-2466>

Muhammad Abid Ali
Bahria University Islamabad
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8826-3053>

Sabahat Anwar
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8649-3234>

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Early Childhood Education:
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A. Murad, M. Abid, S. Anwar

Abstract

Education is the building block for the development of human personality. Children need educational training that not only develops their individuality but prepares them for their vicegerency role to serve their Creator and become a productive member of their society. This qualitative and exploratory study probes the Islamic principles of human nature, learning, and development of human-self for early childhood education in the light of Iqbal's educational philosophy. This analytical approach was selected to justify that the Quranic concepts of human growth and learning have a strong voice to educate children from early childhood. The study concludes that a human self is naturally equipped with an urge and related tools for self-development. Children learn fast due to their human structure based on Fitrah. The main aim of education should therefore be the realization of a strong self through experiential learning to unleash an individual's potentials. Quranic theory of human learning can be derived from Iqbal's explication of the process of development of human self or Khudi.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Islamic Education, Individuality Development, Iqbal's Educational Philosophy, Khudi, Experiential Learning, Natural Education.

Introduction

Children are a trust to be taken care of under our supervision. According to the Prophetic tradition, "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is accountable for his or her flock".¹ As such, any negligence in taking care of the trust could make a detrimental impact on the Muslim community and the society as a whole.²

Early childhood is a time of fast physiological growth, holistic development, and it represents the best opportunity for building the foundation for lifelong learning bearing a significant and lasting impact on the individual.³ This period is thus critical in molding a child's personality, lifelong learning behavior, attitudes, and overall conceptual frameworks.⁴ With the help of some innate psychological forces, the young child is actually capable of self-development without the need for any external intervention, since any undesired interference may lead to poor learning and have some disturbing and unbalancing effects on the child's personality.⁵

¹Muammad b.Ismāil al-Bukhārī, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Dar-us-Salam Hadith, 2015), "Ahkaam", 2 (no.7138).

²Danial Abidin, *7 Formula Individu Cemerlang*. (Kuala Lumpur: PTS Millenia Sdn Bhd. 2008).

³Deniz Kahrman-Ozturk-Refika Olgan et. al., "Preschool Children's Ideas on Sustainable Development: How Preschool Children Perceive Three Pillars of Sustainability with the Regard to 7R", *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice* 12/4 (2012), 2987-2995.

⁴Nazir Qaiser, *Realization of Iqbal's Educational Philosophy in Montessori System* (Lahore: Shirkat Press, 2008).

⁵Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent mind* (Radford: Wilder publications, 2007).

According to the Quran and *Hadith*, every child is born with a pure nature, in the Islamic tradition called *Fitrah*. Such a concept of human nature means that the child is in a complete state of purity which does not involve the presence of any sinful will or intention. Possessing a perfect human nature, the child is designed by the Creator to optimize his existence by fulfilling the purpose of his life leading to success in the Hereafter.⁶

Since the foremost function of education is to nurture the personal growth of a human being, education during early childhood is a crucial responsibility. Education, in fact, helps to achieve perfection in all aspects of personal and social life. In order to achieve a true education from the Islamic perspective, teachers and educators must be inspired by the knowledge of the philosophy and objectives of education as postulated in the Quran and *Sunnah*, respectively.⁷ Actually, these sources are extremely helpful in understanding the purpose of creation, human nature, along with its role and responsibilities, providing also the key to discover the aims of education aiming at facilitating every individual to develop an integrated, balanced, and highly individualized personality.⁸

The potential required for a highly developed individual is ingrained in every human being. According to Iqbal⁹, the human self's latent potentialities demand a

⁶Muhammad Ali Bhat, "Human psychology (*Fitrah*) from Islamic Perspective", *International journal of Nusantara Islam* 4/2 (2016), (Lahore: Shirkat Press, 2008), 61-74.

⁷Muhammad Abid Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2011).

⁸Amina Murad, *Iqbal's educational philosophy: Its implications in early childhood education* (Karachi: Institute of Business Management, 2019).

⁹Muhammad Abid Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's*

process of active learning on the foundations of *Tawheed*. This requires educational aims which develop an emotional attachment to Islam and enable young children to be conscious of their responsibility towards the Creator.¹⁰ Islam lays great stress on good early childhood upbringing and care, protecting the child from physical, psychological and social conditions detrimental for his well-being and future development. In fact, helping the young child to become a righteous citizen who has a sense of belonging to his or her people, society and homeland is of supreme importance.¹¹

However, the contemporary early childhood education system does not fulfill the previously explained aims and no serious work has been done in this regard. Herrera¹² maintains that, despite having the power, the Muslim governments failed to develop a truly Islamic educational system and blindly followed the Western model without adapting it according to the need and aspirations of their citizens. As such, serious work needs to be done to formulate a system in the educational field from an Islamic perspective.

This paper seeks to explore early childhood education from the Islamic perspective on the light of the educational philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), the most notable Muslim poet and philosopher of the East. Allama Muhammad Iqbal presented his educational philosophy, while discussing new ideas inspired by Islamic

educational philosophy.

¹⁰Muhammad Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Ashraf press, 1975).

¹¹Farida Ali-Akila Belembaogo et al., *Children in Islam: Their care, upbringing and protection. The Islamic International Centre for Demographic Studies and Research*. (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, 2005).

¹²Linda Herrera, "Education, Islam and modernity: Beyond westernization and centralization", *Comparative Education Review* 48/3 (2004), 318-326.

teachings on human nature and the development of individuals with high level of self-actualization that are capable of transforming both the self and the society. Iqbal's ideas have been accepted by all segments of society as they are in compliance with the Quranic principles, and have been highly appreciated by the Western scholars as well.¹³ Since many books have been written to confirm the relevance of Iqbal's ideas with Quranic wisdom,¹⁴ they are suitable as a point of reference when education is considered in terms of Islamic principles.

The study seeks to explore the educational ideas from the Islamic perspective in the light of Iqbal's philosophy of education, applicable to early childhood education. Which are the ideas, from the Islamic perspective, in the light of Iqbal's philosophy of education applicable to early childhood?

This study is qualitative and exploratory and intends to apply Quranic ideas on human nature, learning, and development of human-self through education and its implications in early childhood learning. The study also explores Iqbal's ideas of the development of individuality as presented both in poetry and prose. Finally, the aim of this study is to promote a new educational model aspiring to have a positive impact on both the individual and the society as well.

The creation of a human being is the most significant event as vividly described in the Holy Quran. Allah (God) Almighty proclaimed man as a vicegerent on earth whose creation was announced to the angels:

"Just think when your Lord said to the angels "Lo! I

¹³Husain Bilgrami, *Glimpses of Iqbal's mind and thought: Brief lectures on Iqbal delivered at London, Cambridge and Oxford* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1966).

¹⁴Muhammad Munawwar, *Iqbal and Quranic Wisdom* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2006).

*am about to place a vicegerent on earth.”*¹⁵

Though the role is monumental, the Quran describes the humble physical beginning of a human being, depicting the process of his creation. However, the verses end in the Glory of the Creator as the Best among all the creators highlighting His most coveted creation:

*“And certainly, did We create man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.”*¹⁶

Despite this humble form, the human being’s overall creation is described as the best of all designs.

*“We have indeed created man in the best of fashion.”*¹⁷

The most important ingredient in such a weak, yet a perfect design, is the capacity to learn and develop. Iqbal elucidates¹⁸ that such a creative design of a human being is due to the challenging role assigned to him being Creator’s representative on earth.

*“Then Allah taught Adam the names of all things.”*¹⁹

By his honorable position as *Khalifah*, Allah Almighty granted man with knowledge, power, and authority to conquer, manage and preserve the earth in its original form,

¹⁵ *Tafheem-ul-Qur’an*, trans. Syed Abul Ala Maududi (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2009), al-Baqarah 2/30.

¹⁶ al-Mu’mīnūn 23/12-14.

¹⁷ at-Tīn 95/4.

¹⁸ Muhammad Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1989).

¹⁹ al-Baqarah 2/31.

namely free from disorder and lack of balance. However, such a position and power is meant to be judiciously used according to the guidance provided by Allah Almighty through His messengers. According to Mawdudi²⁰, such status only made man a deputy of His Lord who must exercise his authority with utmost caution. The hermeneutical interpretation of the following verse also explains that the angels' concern for some of the human beings' undesirable attitudes, while Allah, the All-Wise, was aware of the positive things that humanity is capable of performing on earth.²¹

Despite this humble form, the human being's overall creation is described as the best of all designs.

*They said: "Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?-while we do celebrate Your praises and glorify Your Holy (Names)?" He said: "I know what you know not."*²²

The Creator thus commanded that human beings should not try to change their nature.

*"Adhere to the Fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. There should be no change in the creation of Allah."*²³

Preserving the *Fitrah* is important as every human being is born to fulfill the assigned responsibilities once he accepted the challenge to take care of the Creator's trust:

"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the

²⁰ *Tafheem-ul-Qur'an*.

²¹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of The Quran* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980) 102-104.

²² al-Baqarah 2/30.

²³ ar-Rūm 30/30.

Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it- he was indeed unjust and foolish.”²⁴

The Holy Quran refers also to human beings being bestowed with the knowledge of *Rab*, the Creator, when they collectively took an oath and accepted Allah Almighty as their Supreme Lord:

“And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], ‘Am I, not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes, we have testified.’ [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Indeed, we were of this unaware.’”²⁵

Thus, the human self must be facilitated to fulfill his purpose of life and play his role as the vicegerent on earth by the worship and service due to the Creator:

“I have not created the Jinn and man but that they should serve Me.”²⁶

Furthermore, every human self has been facilitated in several ways to perform these obligations:

“And indeed, We have honored the progeny of Adam and carried them across land and sea and provided them with good things for their sustenance and exalted them above many of our creatures.”²⁷

Conclusively, the human self must remember his humble origin, his Supreme Creator, and the lofty purpose of his creation and designated role:

“He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, cre-

²⁴al-'Ahzāb 33/72.

²⁵al-'A'rāf 7/172.

²⁶al-Dhāriyāt 51/56.

²⁷al-'Isrā' 17/70.

*ation after creation, within three darknesses. That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs dominion. There is no deity except Him, so how are you averted?"*²⁸

Importance of Early Childhood Education

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Every child is born but on this *Fitrah* (natural disposition) so long as he does not express himself with his tongue."²⁹ *Fitrah*, being the uncorroborated state, the child maintains this nature until consciously acknowledges his bond with the Creator and consequently develops the faith. Such a state means that the child is born pure, sinless, and predisposed to believe in one God. This makes Islam the religion of human nature.³⁰ This places the laws and teachings of Islam and human nature in harmony with each other, while any artificial intervention, which contravenes human nature, will create an unbalance and disarmony, as Quran clearly says:

*"And who is better in obedience (in Deen) than he who resigns himself to Allah?"*³¹

The process of learning starts even before birth.³² Early childhood is, in fact, a crucial period for healthy brain development as it forms the basis for sensory and perceptual systems through which children learn language,

²⁸al-Zumar 39/6.

²⁹Muslim b. al-Hajjāj, *Sahih Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Dar-us-Salam Hadith, 2007), "Alqadr", 6 (no. 38).

³⁰Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'u Ta'arud al 'Aql wa al Naql*, ed. M. R. Sa'im (Riyadh: Jami'at al-Imām Muhammad ibn Sa'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1981) 8, 382-383.

³¹Julie Mennella, Julie-Coren Jagnow-Gary Beauchamp, "Prenatal and Postnatal Flavor Learning by Human Infants", *Pediatrics* 107 (2001), 1-6.

³²Adrienne Tierney-Charles Nelson III, "Brain development and the role of experience in the early years." *Zero to three* 30/2 (2009) 9.

social behavior, and emotions. Hence it is important that early childhood provides them with experiences that facilitate their growth and development in these areas.³³ Tierney underscores the importance of cognitive development, which is at its greatest intensity from 0 to 3 years and requires active and utmost care. During the next three years, the child consciously works towards absorbing knowledge and experience from the environment, whereas, in the next phase of development, he has a natural urge for grouping through some sort of organized activity.³⁴ The early childhood years are therefore crucial for caretakers as this period provides them with a unique opportunity to assist the child during his social, intellectual, emotional, and physical development.³⁵

The body of research implies that children begin to develop their moral intelligence much earlier in life against Piaget's view that moral orientation of equality and fairness occurs during the late childhood period only. Mutual respect also emerges in the early years.³⁶ This is supported by a UNESCO report³⁷ that early childhood education immensely contributes to cultivating ethos, behavior, and skills and enhances performance to achieve sustainable progress at the national level. Ali³⁸ observes that young children's display of dynamic aspects of the human-self slows down with time due to growing out of childhood and other impeding factors such as external interventions

³³Montessori, *The Absorbent mind*.

³⁴Qaiser, *Realization of Iqbal's Educational Philosophy in Montessori System*.

³⁵Elliot Turiel, "Moral development in the early years: When and how", *Human development* 61, (2018) 297-308.

³⁶UNESCO, *EFA global monitoring report 2015- Education for all 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges* (Paris: UNESCO 2015).

³⁷Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy*.

³⁸Syed Qutb, *Fizilal al Qur'an* (Beirut: Darul-Shuruq 1979).

and the prevalent education system. Since human beings are capable of distinguishing between good and bad, they also possess the ability to redirect themselves on the same scale. However, these potentials can be influenced also by their environmental factors, education, and life experiences.³⁹

Education as a Natural Process

Iqbal⁴⁰ considers the development of self (*Khudi*) as a very strong urge, since it is naturally embedded in each individual, leading him or her to develop activities, resulting in new learning and growth. The intensity of this urge for self-development determines the magnitude of learning and growth; the greater the wish, the greater is the learning. Rafiuddin⁴¹ asserts that without this impulse, the organism's growth in any dimension of life is simply impossible. Since modern science ignored the deep features of human features, human civilization seems to be prone to decay⁴². Therefore, understanding the nature of reality and that of the human being is a prerequisite for developing any educational philosophy.⁴³

Many critics of the contemporary education system underline the lack of importance given to the child's nature along with the presence of an undue interference by adults which resulted in an adverse effect on the natural learning ability and curiosity of young children.⁴⁴ Ac-

³⁹Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁴⁰Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁴¹Muhammad Rafiuddin, *First principles of education* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1983).

⁴²William McDougall, *World chaos: The responsibility of science* (London: Taylor Francis, 2014).

⁴³Alistair Ross, *A European education: Citizenship, identities and young people* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham books Ltd., 2008).

⁴⁴John Holt, *How children learn* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2017).

cording to Rousseau⁴⁵, the process of formal education has eradicated the nature out of children, at the same time, discouraging self-realization and promoting instead mass behavior. Robinson⁴⁶ according to a similar perspective, considers education as an organic process since every young child has an innate potential, which he calls element. When nurtured in a conducive environment, this element provides the young heart with a true sense of happiness and self-worth allowing the child to tap into his or her own primal source of energy.

On the basis of this general theory, Iqbal⁴⁷ has actually criticized the current education system which may teach how to worship the Creator but does not facilitate at all the experience of the true and inner act of worship. Furthermore, he reiterates that all opportunities for the self to grow lie in the natural, the material, the secular, respectively, which make the world a 'holy ground'.⁴⁸ When a human being is fulfilling the purpose of his creation and existence, he feels that the obligation to serve his Creator is part of his natural inclination. Such a tendency to serve and worship one's Creator is *Deen*, whereas in the religious context it is the natural state or *Fitrah* of a human being. At this point, *Deen* and *Fitrah* become synonymous which brings harmony and equilibrium in human-self due to the realization of what is inherent in one's true nature. Inversely, the opposite situation brings conflict and dissonance as it is inconsistent to the real nature of the human-self.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: On education*, trans. Allan Bloom, (London: Penguin, 1991)

⁴⁶Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2009).

⁴⁷Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*.

⁴⁸Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, 182.

⁴⁹Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The concept of Islamic education* (Makkah: First World Conference on Muslim Education, 1977).

According to Iqbal's educational philosophy, education must provide the child with the freedom to interact, experience, and invade the material world.⁵⁰ Young children are highly gifted and eager to employ their intelligence and freedom of action to discover the Signs of their Creator in the nature and in the world around them.⁵¹ Challenge and curiosity to learn and gain knowledge about the world are, in fact, inherent features during early childhood. Furthermore, Rahman⁵² has warned for the cautious use of this independence and autonomy in the human sphere of work on earth, knowledge to discover the secrets of the universe through education, research, and experience, learn to explain the forces of nature for his benefit, and gain mastery over them according to his requirements and plan. Though Iqbal appreciates the West for its action based on "scientific observation and interpretation of phenomena",⁵³ he has also criticized the Western model of education, because it has disconnected human beings from their Creator. A true education will help children to channelize all their actions through spiritual connection with their Creator, service and obedience, and maintain their original self or *Fitrah* and dignified psychological status that make them superior to angels and other creations.⁵⁴

*"We have honored the sons of Adam; provide them transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure, and conferred on them special favors above a great part of our creation."*⁵⁵

⁵⁰Mian Muhammad Tufail, *Iqbal's philosophy and education* (Lahore: The Bazm-i-Iqbal, 1966).

⁵¹Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, 55.

⁵²Fazlur Rahman, *Encyclopedia of Seerah* (London: Seerah Foundation. 1988) 6, 9-10.

⁵³Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*, 12.

⁵⁴S. M. Al-Attas, *The concept of Islamic education*.

⁵⁵al-'Isrā' 17/70.

However, such an honorable position and favor last as long as the human self struggles to maintain it, otherwise he will be disgraced to the lowest in the ladder of creations, since the freedom to choose honor or disgrace has been left in the hands of human beings.⁵⁶ The Holy Quran warns:

*“Then We degrade him to the lowest of the low.”*⁵⁷

Iqbal complains⁵⁸ of the school and *maktab* systems that rob children’s freedom to form lofty ideals and unravel their self-actualization. This is due to their limited beliefs about learning which make the children slaves of the mundane set of instructions thought in schools and *maktab*, at the same time, depriving them of divergent learning experiences, which help them to perform and reach high goals:

*“Iqbal! Do not mention here the science of Ego (Khudi) Such theses are not suitable for schools. It is better for the poor wagtails the state and stations of the hawk are hidden.”*⁵⁹

The development of individuality is therefore an indispensable task of education as the responsibility of vice-regency cannot be performed without developing a highly dynamic individual.⁶⁰ At the same time, the dynamic aspect of the Creator’s Self is manifested in His ever-changing universe:

⁵⁶ Abbas Razak, *Contribution of Iqbal’s Dynamic personality Theory to Islamic Psychology: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud and Selective Mainstream Western Psychology* (Kualalumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2011).

⁵⁷ al-Tīn 95/5.

⁵⁸ Muhammad Iqbal *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, ed. Syed Talib Hussain Bukhari, (Lahore: Istaqlal Press, 1990).

⁵⁹ Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, 591.

⁶⁰ Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*.

*“Every day doth some new work employ Him.”*⁶¹

Consequently, a highly developed self is bound to be creative due to nearness to his Creator. As such, the responsibility of vicegerency cannot be performed without the free exercise of creativity and individuality. According to Iqbal⁶², creative activity is a sign of freedom whereas repetition being its opposite, manifests mechanical action. Since Science seeks to validate the laws of mechanical repetition, it is not possible to validate the creative activity of life in terms of mechanism. As a result, science cannot understand life.

Children during the early childhood period are highly creative and curious with a spark of desire in their eyes and movements. They explore the secrets of nature as their life is free from the confines of discrimination.⁶³ Robinson⁶⁴ appreciates the capacity of innovation and creativity in young children due to their willingness to make mistakes without fear, which is actually the greatest barrier to self-discovery. According to Iqbal,⁶⁵ creativity and the challenging nature of the human self, demands the continuous formation of new ideas. To motivate children, Iqbal uses interesting analogies that appeal to them, such as the honey bee flying from flower to flower. Iqbal then compares honey bees with children, honey with knowledge, and books with flowers and motivates young children to work hard like a honey bee, loving books and pursuing knowledge.⁶⁶

⁶¹al-Hashr 59/29.

⁶²Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*.

⁶³Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, 97.

⁶⁴Ken Robinson, *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative* (West Sussex: Capstone Publishing Ltd, 2011).

⁶⁵Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁶⁶Syed Fakir Waheeduddin, *Rozgar-i-Faqeer* (Lahore: Islami Publishing Company, 1964) 398-399, 591.

Education as a Social Process

According to Tufail,⁶⁷ Iqbal⁶⁸ views education as a social process and an institution where education policies differ according to the societies they cater to. Iqbal argues that an educational system must define the type of qualities that the society needs to instill in pupils according to its values and ideals. This modification is important for the preservation of self as an individual needs dynamic interaction with communal life to grow to its fullest potential. Such growth cannot take place in isolation.⁶⁹ According to Iqbal,⁷⁰ as a member of the ideal community, when the individual follows the twin principles of conflict and harmony, he can fully express one's self. At the same time, the community also reaches its perfect state due to its self-affirming individuals. According to this perspective, the community does not become an obstacle for self-realization; instead, it provides individuals with a fair challenge. Montessori⁷¹ also endorses the importance of social experiences during the early childhood period for an effective intellectual and personality development. According to her, children during this very important stage of their life learn social skills such as compassion, cooperation, imitation, and responsibility throughout mutual interaction.

Iqbal⁷² firmly believes that the fundamental part of an education system that serves Muslims is *Tawheed* - the oneness of God, which can change the destiny of both the self and the society. Belief in the Oneness of Allah

⁶⁷Tufail, *Iqbal's philosophy and education*

⁶⁸Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*, 591.

⁶⁹Razak, *Contribution of Iqbal's Dynamic personality Theory to Islamic Psychology*.

⁷⁰Muhammad Iqbal, *The secrets of the selflessness* trans. J. Arberry Arthur (London: John Murray, 1953).

⁷¹Montessori, *The Absorbent mind*.

⁷²Iqbal, *The secrets of the selflessness*.

Almighty ensures in fact the achievement of sublime ideals like freedom, equality, unity, social order, and solidarity.

For Iqbal, educating the self in the faith of *Tawheed* could make an immense impact on society as it unleashes the hidden powers of the self to explore the physical world. As a result of this interaction, both self and society reap great benefits.⁷³ Through education, then, society ensures the active participation of the young child in the community life and provides him or her with a wholesome environment conducive to character building, growth of personality, and skill development for occupation in adult life.⁷⁴ Education will therefore be meaningful when the beliefs and values of the society it serves are defined along with the qualities that it desires to instill in its people. Grigg⁷⁵ maintains that historically, education and the concept of being civilized and knowledgeable were purely rooted in faith. When inspirational and faith-based quotes, prayers, and stories are a part of the curriculum, the young child does not need extra effort to put into making him understand and follow the religion. This gives a message to the child that religion is part of life and not isolated from it. Mawdudi⁷⁶ has asserted that the vision of education and religion is the same as it has a profound effect on the development of a God-fearing society and individuals with critical and analytical minds. Such a holistic system accepts the value of physical and social sciences and depends on them to complete the enigma of knowledge and benefit society.

Iqbal has explicitly warned against imitating a foreign education system, which may prove fatal in the realm of

⁷³Iqbal, *The secrets of the selflessness* 35.

⁷⁴Tufail, *Iqbal's philosophy and education*.

⁷⁵Russell Grigg, *Becoming an outstanding primary school teacher* (Harlow: Longman 2010).

⁷⁶Syed Mawdudi, *The education*, trans. S. M. Rauf, (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 2000).

its nation's philosophy of life and its ideals, norms, and values.⁷⁷ Iqbal has expressed grievances over the nature of the soul-less Western education system of his time, while he has likened the East to a leper who has lost his exterior beauty.

Education of the Functions of Self

Since life is highly individual, individuality of every human is self-activated and self-motivated.⁷⁸ Each individual will be responsible for his actions on the Day of Judgment as mentioned in the Quran:

*"Whoever chooses to follow the right path, for his soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear a burden of the other, nor do We chastise until We send an Apostle to them."*⁷⁹

Every child is a dynamic entity, whose actions can be exploited and translated into productive and creative acts⁸⁰. Although the self (*Khudi*) is blessed with inherent creative powers and spirituality, these aspects have been neglected by the modern educators resulting in a soul-less and dry educational patterns and models.⁸¹ The stability of self is directly proportional to self-realization, therefore parents and teachers must be aware of the function of the self as the formation of ideals for its development, as the continuation of life depends on it.⁸² Love and desire for

⁷⁷Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy*.

⁷⁸Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁷⁹al-'Isrā' 17/15.

⁸⁰Montessori, *The Absorbent mind*.

⁸¹Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁸²Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy*.

an ideal lead both to an highly dynamic self, and in their absence the child will be unable to use his natural faculties and tools. All developments in the field of culture, science and arts are the result of the powerful application of human faculties and tools. Ali⁸³ suggests using such methodologies in education, which develop passion and motivation in young minds and hearts. As such, Iqbal has laid great stress on the development of self as the prime aim of education, preferred over all other aims and activities.⁸⁴

Iqbal⁸⁵ is convinced that without a positive active life, the self will get involved in self-destructive activities and unable to grow and survive. The stability of life depends upon a stable self which is the outcome of the continuous growth and development in the form of experiential learning activities that bring forth the hidden potentialities of an individual. Young children must be involved in creative activities and allowed trial and error to develop self-realization of their latent abilities. A highly developed personality is therefore the manifestation of a strong *Khudi* in perpetual action. Conclusively, learning, and education is much more than mere attainment of a body of concepts; it is the manifestation of self-development.⁸⁶

⁸³Ali, *An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy*.

⁸⁴Khwaja Saiyidain, *Iqbal's education philosophy* (Lahore: Ashraf Press. 1971).

⁸⁵Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁸⁶Murad, *Iqbal's educational philosophy: Its implications in early childhood education*.

Conclusion

Early childhood period is a state of human purity with an enormous appetite for learning, growth and development. The Islamic teachings lay great stress on the importance of early childhood as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) instructed to keep a good name and give good education.⁸⁷ Honoring children can be achieved only through providing them with a sound upbringing, good education based on Islamic principles, science and ethics that help them to avoid adverse effects on their behavior in society or to deviate from righteousness.⁸⁸

Being in a state of *Fitrah*, children during early childhood have strong internal and external self and appreciate their individuality by exploring their environment. Since they are closer to nature, this stage of life is the best one to provide a sound education on the foundations of *Tawheed*.⁸⁹ Any objectionable concepts in education should be rejected, while the intellectual, along with poets and writers, should develop a literature focused on the reawakening of Muslim community and design curricular material depicting *Tawheed* as the motivational force for children.⁹⁰ At the same time, Iqbal⁹¹ recommends flexibility in education by allowing continuous reconstruction of curricula to keep pace with the ever-changing world. Consequently, education system should have the capacity

⁸⁷Muammad b. Abd Allāh Khatib Al-Tabrizi, *Mishkat-ul-Masabih*, trans. Muhammed Mahdi Al-Sharif (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2012), "Nikah", 2 (no. 3138).

⁸⁸Farida Ali-Akila Belembaogo et al., *Children in Islam: Their care, upbringing and protection*.

⁸⁹Murad, Iqbal's educational philosophy: Its implications in early childhood education.

⁹⁰Ali, An analysis of conceptions and practices of Pakistani educators in private Islamic schools in light of Iqbal's educational philosophy.

⁹¹Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*.

to transform itself according to its new demands.

Experiential learning is an important aspect of early childhood education as young children are eager to unleash their hidden potentialities through active learning.⁹² Experiences play a pivotal role in providing a sound education as early childhood experiences develop brain and its related functions in a much different way than the later year experiences.⁹³ Young children are not afraid to make mistakes, give importance to their likes and demand self-respect which is supported by the Prophetic tradition teaching to be just and respectful towards one's children.⁹⁴

Every child has a strong sense of individuality as according to Iqbal,⁹⁵ individuality is highly original, challenging and in continuous clash with the environment for its growth. Education being a social process, children need experiences that develop strong bonding with the community, therefore Ali recommends social responsibility as one of the aims of education, and children should be taught the ideals of justice, community service, in order to develop an appropriate relation with society that make them good and beneficial Muslim citizens.

Endowed with such natural dispositions, children during their early years actively pursue activities to find their own ways towards physical, spiritual and emotional growth and maturation. They are eager and self-learners inquisitive of the natural phenomena such as mountains, clouds with keen observation and questions. Such a challenging

⁹²Murad, *Iqbal's educational philosophy: Its implications in early childhood education*.

⁹³Tierney, Adrienne L., and Charles A. Nelson III, "Brain development and the role of experience in the early years."

⁹⁴Abu Dawood Sulaiman bin Ash'ath, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, trans. Yasir Qadhi (Dar-us-Salam Hadith, 2008), "Al-Ijarah", 1282 (no. 3416).

⁹⁵Khurram Murad, *The heart and the Qur'an*. Retrieved November 15, 2018, from <https://www.islamicity.com> (2011).

nature is due to their heart which is full of passion and desires to conquer the secrets of the universe.⁹⁶ Due to their self-motivated nature, education process should be original and organic allowing children to grow and happily live out of their comfort zone.⁹⁷ Iqbal⁹⁸ considers the creative activity as a means to self-realization. To a young child, learning is a concrete and continuous phenomenon that requires a favorable environment with ample opportunities to experience the undiscovered world around (Figure 1).⁹⁹



Conclusively, every individual self is uniquely designed as vicegerent on earth with an inherently ability to create and the capacity to shape his or her own destiny.¹⁰⁰ Children during their early years are dynamically engaged in self-development. As the child's challenging nature desires and searches to form ideals, his passion and desire

⁹⁶Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, 55.

⁹⁷Robinson, *Robinson, Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*.

⁹⁸Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

⁹⁹Murad, *Iqbal's educational philosophy: Its implications in early childhood education*.

¹⁰⁰Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

for them developed in the heart, at the same time, stimulate his individuality to involve in meaningful activities to achieve the same.¹⁰¹ Therefore experiential learning is important as it allows the child to use all his cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual faculties for learning and growth.¹⁰² The young child's heart is a bundle of desire for challenge and curiosity, as this far the child has not yet accepted any external influences.¹⁰³

There are many more principles of Islamic education given in the Quran as well as in Iqbal's educational thoughts. The researcher therefore recommends further research in these areas to deduce more recommendations for early childhood education as well as education at all levels.

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¹⁰¹Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

¹⁰²Iqbal, *The secrets of the self*.

¹⁰³Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*.

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Amina Murad
Institute of Business Management, Karachi
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0620-2466>
aminamurad02@gmail.com

Muhammad Abid Ali
Bahria University Islamabad
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8826-3053>
MuhammadAbid.buic@bahria.edu.pk

Sabahat Anwar
Home Schooler
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8649-3234>
sabzee@gmail.com